

And they said, "Not so, indeed, my Lord, for our father has twelve sons, and we ten he sent to Egypt to buy corn; and one of the remaining is dead, and the youngest is at home with his father this day." And Joseph answered, "It is well that you have given this description of your family for now (by the life of Pharaoh) ye shall be proved by this circumstance, and I shall know whether there is any truth in you." And he called to one of his guards, and ordered him to conduct them to prison; and having put them all into one dungeon, they were shut up, and were fed with the common allowance of prisoners. One remark seems necessary here, upon the conversation of Joseph. It is to be feared, that his connections in Egypt had a tendency to draw him into very loose bits, or at least he seems to have conformed too much to the prevailing conversation of the court. Hence, in his last speech to his brethren, he inserts what he says, with the forcible expressions,

"By the life of Pharaoh," which must be esteemed as a vain oath, which God has, in his law, forbidden to be used. And I hope this reflection may be of use, to teach my young readers, the importance of precaution in their language, as well as in their actions. But to return to Joseph's brethren. We may conceive somewhat of their unfeigned distress in the circumstances in which we left them. Reuben, the oldest of them, began with upbraiding them for obstinately persisting in their malice against Joseph, as he supposed the Lord was now about to punish them for that infamous transaction, though it was at such a distance of time. Their minds were all filled with horror, and their consciences loaded with guilt. Under the most gloomy apprehensions they spent the night, and the dawn of day did not much lessen their distress. Joseph on the third morning visited their dungeon, and while he heard them speaking of their family affairs to each other, without